Lessons Learned Record of Interview

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LLP01 – Strategy and Planning					
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(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) ▓▓▓▓▓▓					
SIGAR Attendees:					
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• Alert List Description and Methodology • Changing Nature of Conflict Analysis • Current Applications • Global Data, Social Media and Field Experiments • ▓▓▓ Comparative Advantage • Possible Collaboration					

"We will go to war again and we will spend money, so we need to make sure we are spending money better and more efficiently." – Interviewee A

▓▓▓▓▓ Description and Methodology

C) ▓▓▓▓▓ tie most directly to the research you [SIGAR] are doing and have really gained momentum over the last three or four years. We, as a contractor, conduct them on an annual basis. It is a worldwide list with each country having an established rank based on fragility and instability. Each list is based on an analytic framework. We cyclically analyze the data which is updated each year to create the scores and then organize them into the formal list.

A) What is unique is that we use a comprehensive set of open sources to generate the data. We used to use (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) ▓▓▓▓. They are split into four categories: political, security, economic, or social.

Below these four levels, the subdivision then looks at components like legitimacy or efficiency. We use statistical methods to rank the countries and conduct the analysis. The portion dedicated to instability is more of a forecasting methodology and is only five or six indicators which we pull from the state failure indicators. Our main concern is what has happened prior and is less focused on predictive analysis.

Our latest contract included an updated methodology. To test this methodology we have to retroactively predict the Arab Spring; we had to predict the rising insecurity.

C) It [the methodology] has been revised substantially and we will finalize it [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] in two or three weeks. Once finalized, we will proceed with working with this new model.

A) Both [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] are at the country level unit of analysis. Analysis at this level, however, can't say when or where to certain degrees. It can't look at which administrative units are more or less prone to instability. The intent of [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] program was to get granular, and, for example, focus on development aid, intra-state conflict and how to capitalize on available conflict data (which is usually geo-coded). There is emphasis on Africa, since there is so much data right now, but also in other countries like Afghanistan. With the geo-coded conflict data we can look at similarly geo-coded aid projects and how they may overlap or conflict – temporally or geographically. We tend not to worry about getting down to resolution at the daily level, but instead look at the quarter or half-year levels and at least at the first order administrative divisions instead of the country-level.

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C) [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] actually gave us a brief history of the [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] not too long ago. The first list was in about 2005 or 2006 and was met with universal hostility inside and outside of [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)].

A) The tension was between the office of [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] and other internal offices. The field offices believed their country was different and that they are the ones who truly know its history and the important variables. The [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] however, was still a systematic way to measure many countries and to measure variations across many countries. The rankings were hard because it would compare one country against another, and staff at launch events for the list still maintained that their country was different.

C) In the last three or four years, the level of institutional appreciation has increased substantially. There has also been a steady increase in interest from the interagency. The lists were usually used internally but now are spreading through the interagency and getting recognition. People want it and the audience is more receptive.

A) It [the improved reception of [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] is correlated to [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)]]. He was formerly with our group and is now with [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] is an experienced advocate and pushes it forward internally quite well.

C) [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] is also a PhD. in political science and can convey the details of the list and many levels of expertise.

A) We have been contacted by people all over the world who use [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] including the [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] and many defense and interior ministries who use the [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] for planning purposes. They [(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)] also use it for risk forecasting and to plan around what countries are at most risk.

C) *"It is my view that the U.S. Government is more receptive to evidence-based studies even more so now since budgets are so tight and need to lean toward this type of analysis [to be more efficient with spending]."*

Changing Nature of Conflict Analysis

C) One aspect [of how the study of intra-state conflict] has changed over the last fourteen years is the academic literature. The academic literature concerning the onset of civil war or intra-state conflict was very much focused on the country-level and we used largely structural variables like GDP per capita or

ethnic heterogeneity. For assessing conflict probability we looked at regime type and status, and regime orientation to the international economy.

A) It was this level of analysis [on regime characteristics or GDP per capita] that were reflected in the instability analysis for the ▆▆▆▆▆ only because that was what data existed and there thus a rationale for using it.

C) There was a real explosion of data that happened and it disaggregated conflict data and usually geo-coded it; there is a lot available now on predictive variables. The basic thing I did was to identify actors that challenged the regime, such as rebel combatants, and their characteristics. There was a lot of data on ethnic exclusion through our Zurich connection [International Conflict Research group at ETH Zurich]. We disaggregated data below the country-level to the local level and could look at where ethnic groups are and their relationship to the regime and inter-ethnic dynamics.

A) I see the evolution of the data a bit like the field of chemistry. For decades we thought the atom was the smallest level of analysis, but now we know we can go even deeper. Now the country level analysis is too limiting and we break the data in smaller units like rebel groups.

Current Applications

C) We now have data on rebel groups and how they conflict with each other. We can generate data on the size of "shelter" armed forces provide rebel groups. Now we have a substantial amount of data that allows for finer grain theory testing (spatially and temporally).

A) As for the physical presence variables, *interviewee 'b'* has been looking at that. He looks at number and location of bases and the strength of armed forces. Others are doing similar analysis on territorial control versus where conflict has occurred. Now we can turn the geocodes or the physical location of conflict into a map of where is it happening and see what else is happening in the same area (such as the ethnic landscape, economic activity or aid projects). In the last two or three years we have also seen the increased use of satellite data to measure economic productivity. It was hard to measure economic activity until now with the use of satellites.

C) We used to have to do cross-sectional analysis and the cross-national level.

A) Now we can look dynamically at more countries; not just at one variable as it was five years ago, but now we have more than a dozen of variables with this resolution [on economic activity].

C) We also are now looking at data regarding the killing of the civilian population by the government and the rebel groups – "one-sided attacks". The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) in Sweden is doing a lot to improve this data set. We can now ask increasingly sophisticated questions on when and why civilians are targeted. We look also at where and have even disaggregated variables as to why.

B) The Empirical Studies of Conflict project (ESOC) took event level data and ran an analysis, but our concern was how they aggregated the total number of SIGACTs.

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A) The evolution of the field and the methodology used to study conflict at the country level broaden beyond what was largely econometrics. We can now do analysis at lower level landscapes with computational modeling and can start to peer into counterfactuals. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) is doing some work on Afghanistan and may have examples of computational modeling. The advantage is the ability to look at counterfactuals such as what if the distribution or deployment of money or forces was different and the potential affects. The issue was always what do we evaluate against? What would an alternative past look like?

C) Scenario analysis is also more interesting with computational modeling because you can move beyond the 'toy models' and start adding is hard evidence and contextualizing. If you change certain pieces of the model, your faith increases and so does the model's credibility.

A) There were really only two scholarly articles on computational modeling published around 2001. One was by (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) which looked at the formation of post-Soviet states and one (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) did in the Journal of Conflict Resolution which focused on ethnic violence (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) looked primarily at (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C). We were contacted by many government agencies (including (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) concerning our work on leadership structures and closed regimes. Today, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) has published has published more than five additional articles. Another example is how there are now well-developed scenarios on inter-group violence under different peace plans in Jerusalem down to the city level. Overall, computational models allow for more evidence-based and granular analysis. *"Over the last five years, there has been a conflict event data revolution."*

Global Data, Social Media and Field Experiments

B) Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT) is just coming online for accessing global data for conflict analysis.

A) We are still evaluating 'IQ', which came online four months ago, for gaps. It is led by **Stephen Shellman** at the College of William and Mary. "SPEED" is not up to date and only includes data up until 2006. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED), and the Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD) are mainly focused on Africa and not really anywhere beyond. Our proposal for our current projects included looking at 35 or so countries, but now we have coverage of more or less 50 countries. I know that ACLED does weekly or monthly Africa updates and I hope that in a few years, we will be able to have consistent worldwide updates.

C) Two other trends include 1) using social media for conflict analysis, especially in the earliest stages of conflict; and 2) field experiments. We may be seeing a standard approach for field experimentation within political science. **Jason Lyall** [Director of the Political Violence FieldLab at Yale] and **Chris Blattman** have conducted field experiments (the latter mainly on economics). *"Proving causal relationships is becoming more demanding in academia and experimental work can help make that case easier."*

A) Social media, like Facebook and Twitter, present other problems with the availability of data. The data usually available is incomplete and not vetted. Companies that aggregate social media traffic are making it less available and are increasing the prices; they are becoming more strict gatekeepers of data. It now means a high price for a small piece of data from self-selected participants and that leads it to not necessarily be great data despite it still being big data.

B) Field experiments try to mimic lab environments. As social scientists we mostly often have to rely on random cases, like CERP. Since CERP was spent randomly by the military you can't really have or explain a control/treatment group.

C) Field experiments can be used in post-conflict studies to look at interactions and to see what policies will work.

A) There is also a big push on monitoring and evaluation and toward better metrics. For example, we can use 'matching', which is a statistical process, to FIND control variables and then backtrack experiments.

C) For CERP we would look at what varies. We would look at villages which received CERP money and those that did not and compare the large set. We would match like villages with funding to similar and nearby villages without funding.

A) It is increasingly harder to do matching at the granular level, especially over the long-term.

Lessons Learned Record of Interview

Comparative Advantage

C) Our comparative advantage includes our resources and our training.

A) Another advantage is that both our projects are (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

C) The (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) work has been pushed through the interagency is even presented to (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) Presentations have also been made to the (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Possible Collaboration

C) What we would need is you [SIGAR] to articulate on paper the questions of analysis. This would allow us to estimate level of effort and time necessary for the analysis.

B) We could, for example, study the effectiveness of CERP and make a presentation to you on it.